

A Minute A Day

For
LENT



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This booklet, we hope, will be helpful in understanding and appreciating the Lenten season. There is a meditation for each day of Lent; the Scripture texts and the prayers have been taken from the Mass of that day. It will be helpful to read the proper of the Mass in connection with these meditations. We have omitted the Sundays, since a sermon appropriate to the season is usually given at Mass.

THE AUTHORS



Ash Wednesday

Our Need for God

*Hear us, O Lord, for Your mercy is kind.
(Ps. 68, 2. Blessing of Ashes.)*

To beg from our fellow men their charity, to need their pity, to depend on their generosity is a humiliation we avoid at almost any cost.

To seek, however, from God, His charity, His pity, His compassionate generosity, is the very heart of our salvation. Our carefully nurtured self-reliance, our proud independence, upon which we have placed so much of our hope for success, becomes an invitation to failure if carried into our relationship with God.

To experience the fear that comes from recognizing that we are helpless—this is the beginning of wisdom. Lent forces this fact into our consciousness.

Upon our forehead is a smear of ashes. In our ears is the reminder that from dust we have come, and to dust we are destined to return; in our hearts the knowledge that it is only the merciful choice of God that keeps us from slipping back into the nothingness from which we came.

We need God. We need His mercy. This is the basic fact of life, and the one we would most like to forget.

Lent is a time to remember our dependence on God, a time to recall our need for mercy, a time to face up to reality.

Prayer: Look with favor, O Lord, on those who bow before Your majesty, that they who have been refreshed with the divine gift may ever be strengthened with heavenly aids. Amen.



Thursday After Ash Wednesday Penance

Thus says the Lord: Put your house in order, for you shall die and not live. (Is. 38, 1.)

Penance is a word with a harsh ring. Its traditional synonyms—hair shirts, chains, self-inflicted pain—grate on the twentieth-century nervous system. But the necessity for penance remains.

We have multiplied our sins. Christ, through the sacrament of Penance, has multiplied His forgiveness. But we are left with a proneness to sin, battle-scarred, shopworn, and weakened in our power to resist.

The role of penance is to strengthen our will power and heal the wounds caused by our sins. Without this extra effort—unless we do penance—we “shall all likewise perish.”

There is no need, however, to go searching for the extraordinary. Opportunities for penance, more than we could exhaust, fill our days.

The Church has set rules for Lenten fasting. We can begin our penance, our self-denial, by being extremely slow to excuse ourselves, or to be excused from their restrictions.

Hair shirts? Try living cheerfully with the neighbor who irritates you, the fellow worker whose manners exasperate you, the employer whose com-

mands are curt, and the gossip who has spoiled your name.

Chains? Does anything bind more tightly than the routine of your life, your duties to your family, and the restrictions of your income.

Penance is where you find it, in what you do with the numberless opportunities to deny yourself.

Prayer: O God, who are offended by sin, and appeased by penance, graciously regard the prayers of Your people making supplication to You, and turn aside the scourge of Your anger, which we deserve for our sins. Amen.



Friday After Ash Wednesday Generosity

You are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt. 5, 48.)

Whom do you love? If you love only those who love you, what reward can you hope for; even an evil man does this much. Do you go out of your way to be generous with those who could not possibly return your generosity? Do you speak well of those whom you know will "cut" you behind your back?

It's a question of standards. The temptation is to use the world's—be good to those who are good to you. But Christ says to us, that we are to be perfect even as His heavenly Father is perfect. We are to do more than others. The heart of the following of Christ is generosity.

We are to be generous as God the Father has been generous. He has no need of us. Our very existence is His free gift. From all the possible beings He might have created, He made me.

Christ freely chose to redeem us who had returned to His Father acts of rebellion rather than

gratitude. The depth of His generosity extended to the very manner of our redemption. He could have saved us with a word. Instead He chose the extravagance of the cross.

The Holy Spirit continues the generosity of God by continuing to dwell in our souls, a too often neglected guest, who ceases not to help us.

We are to be as perfect in our generosity as our Father who is in Heaven.

Prayer: Grant, we pray You, O Lord, that the sacrifice of the Lenten observance, which we offer, may both render our souls acceptable, and give us the power of a readier self-denial. Amen.



Saturday After Ash Wednesday

Courage

Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid. (Mk. 6, 50.)

It was late, and the heavy wind that blew forced the apostles in the boat to strain at the oars. The going was arduous. Then from out of the darkness came the figure of Christ. At first He was a frightening figure, for He appeared like a ghost. But then He spoke. "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid." A moment later He had joined them in the boat, and the wind died away.

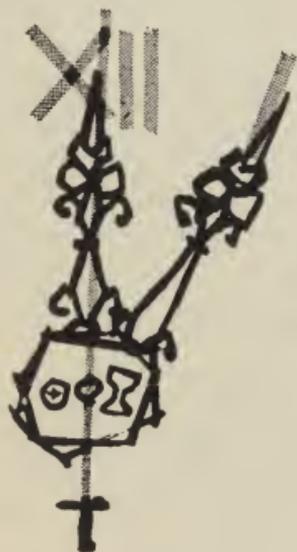
Lent has hardly begun, but already the difficulty of living up to our ideas has begun to tell. To face up honestly to our helplessness, to make penance part of our day, to imitate the generosity of Christ—it is more difficult than we imagined. It can be frightening and discouraging. But look hard!

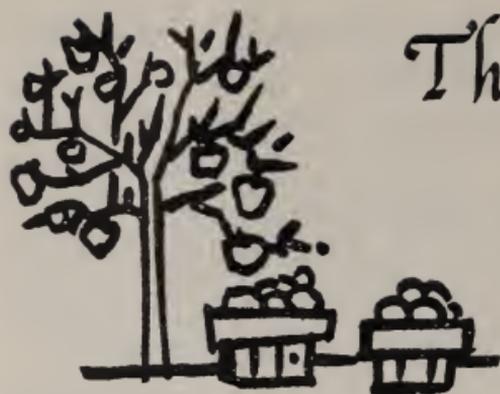
There in the darkness, behind the unattractive exterior of penance, is the figure of Christ. He has for you, if you will listen for His voice, the

same message He had for the apostles: "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid."

Now is the time for prayer. Now is the time to renew the resolutions which occurred to you so spontaneously as Lent approached. Take courage. The graces that Christ will grant you are many. They will be, however, in proportion to the persistence with which you accept the help of Christ.

Prayer: Let Your faithful, O God, be confirmed through Your gifts, that, receiving the same, they may still seek them and, seeking them, may receive them without end. Amen.





The First Week of LENT

Monday of the First Week

Virtue

I was hungry and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink. (Matt. 25, 35.)

The description of the last judgment given us by Christ in today's Gospel has two lessons for us. Both are well worth the effort to understand them.

First of all, He stresses the positive practice of virtue. Little is said about the great mortal sins that we are so conscious of. The only sins mentioned are sins of omission: we neglected to do something.

This is certainly a great lesson. Too often we think of our spiritual lives only in terms of sin: Is this a sin? Is it a mortal sin?

We never think to inquire: What kind things can I do today? Will I have the opportunity to be generous and unselfish? What would Christ do if He were in my place now?

The second lesson is that Christ identifies Himself with our neighbor. Whatever we do to our neighbor, whether good or bad (and let's not forget that by our neighbor, Christ means everyone), we do to Him.

This idea, so simple to understand, is not so simple to put into practice. Our neighbors do not look like Christ, they do not speak like Him, they

do not act like Him. They may be selfish, inconsiderate, boorish.

Nevertheless, Christ's meaning is clear. Whatever we do to others, we do to Him. Therefore, let everything we do be done as though it were done to Him, and Jesus will be waiting with His reward.

Prayer: Sanctify, O Lord, the gifts offered to You, and cleanse us from the stains of our sins. Amen.



Tuesday of the First Week

God

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord. (Isaias 55, 8.)

It is essential that we have a correct idea of what God is. We cannot understand Him completely in this life, but we should try at least to root out any false image of Him that we might have.

St. Thomas Aquinas says that it is easier to know what God is *not* than to know what He is. And today we find two mistaken notions of His nature among believers.

The first is John Calvin's idea that God is a God of fear. According to him, God is a terrible judge who waits for the opportunity to pounce on us the moment we step out of line. He is a God of terror, of vengeance, of thunder and lightning.

At the present time, another idea of God is popular. According to this idea, God is "my buddy." He is a friendly old coot with a long beard. He is too kind to send anyone to hell.

This old codger would love to sit down with us and discuss the American League pennant race, the right shade of lipstick for this season, and the best ways to get rid of crabgrass.

The truth, of course, lies in the middle. God is our friend; He proved that by dying on the cross. But He hates sin and will judge us for it.

Prayer: May our prayers rise up to You, O Lord, and may You drive away all wickedness from Your Church. Amen.



Ember Wednesday

Perseverance

Moses . . . went up on the mountain; and there he stayed forty days and forty nights. (Ex. 24, 18.)

Forty days! Moses was on the mountain forty days; Elias walked forty days on the strength of the food the Lord had given him; Jesus fasted forty days before beginning His public ministry.

Anyone can be fervent and devout for a short while. As others go on an alcoholic spree, so we can go on a religious spree. Momentary fervor might mean something, it might be genuine, but only time can tell. This is one of the reasons for the long period of training required of candidates for the priesthood.

The Church wants to test and to toughen our spirit of penance and self-denial during Lent. Since a few days would have little value, she gives us the scriptural period of forty days.

Equally important with the development of a spirit of penance that Lent produces is the development of a spirit of perseverance.

Sometimes during Lent we feel as though we were just "hanging on." That is fine, that's the way it should be. The emotional boost, the first fervor, are gone. We are left with only a persevering faith.

Prayer: We offer You, O Lord, sacrifices of reconciliation, that in Your mercy You may forgive us our sins and direct our wavering hearts. Amen.



Thursday of the First Week A Sense of Humor

O taste and see that the Lord is sweet. (Ps. 33, 9.)

The stationary Mass in Rome is celebrated today at the Church of St. Lawrence in Panisperna where, according to an old tradition, the saint was burnt to death on a gridiron.

The story of St. Lawrence is one of courage, devotion and love of the poor. It also teaches the importance of a sense of humor. St. Lawrence, while being roasted on the gridiron, is reported to have said, "You can turn me over now; I'm done on this side."

Another famous martyr, St. Thomas More, showed the same spirit. As he was about to be beheaded by the agents of King Henry VIII, he brushed aside his long beard, and said: "This, at least, has committed no treason."

A real Catholic spirit always has something of the humorous in it. Catholics are noted for being able to joke about their religion much more readily than others do. This is the way it should be.

Humor is an antidote to stuffiness, self-righteousness and puritanism. To be merry, to be joyful and cheerful, this is part of the essence of real religion. Not to take ourselves too seriously is an important condition of spiritual progress.

Humor can degenerate into sarcasm, ridicule and irreverence. Fear of such a perversion is no excuse for despising humor. As we know, the abuse of a thing should never hinder the rightful use of it.

The great saints, the outstanding leaders of the Church, millions of down-to-earth Catholics, have a grand sense of humor. It is a divine gift. If we do not have it, we ought to pray for it.

Prayer: Out of the abundance of Your gifts, O Lord, sustain us by temporal helps and renew us by those that are eternal. Amen.



Ember Friday

Presumption

When the just turns himself away from his justice and commits iniquity, he shall die therein. (Ezech. 18, 24.)

The Lesson of today's Mass warns the just man to beware of presumption, to be always on his guard. No matter how many good things we have done, no matter how long we have persevered, we can still sin and be lost.

Even a great Apostle like St. Paul spoke about working out his salvation "in fear and trembling." He always warns the man who thinks he stands firm to beware of a fall.

Part of the problem involved in presumption comes from the fact that we do not realize that our temptations change. The temptations we have at sixteen are not exactly the same as those of twenty-six, and these are not the same as those we have at thirty-six and beyond.

One who has had great difficulty with chastity during youth rejoices when he finally begins to overcome it, when it all seems to be part of the past.

He is not aware that now he is strongly tempted to enmesh himself in material comforts and temporal security, to be far too much concerned with dollar bills.

A person noted for his patience and kindness may be surprised to discover that he becomes just

the opposite as he gets older, that now he is a cranky old cuss.

All of this should warn us that, though we always keep hope and confidence, we still ought to watch and pray; the battle is not over yet.

Prayer: Hear us, O merciful God, and show our minds the light of Your grace. Amen.



Ember Saturday

The Priesthood

In those days, all the priests made prayer, while the sacrifice was consuming, Jonathan beginning and the rest answering. (2 Machabees 1, 23.)

The priest is called to be a hero. He is to stand apart from family, from social class, and to represent men in their dealings with God and to represent God in His dealings with men.

He is given definite powers by ordination. He can offer the sacrifice of the Mass, which represents and re-presents the death of Christ on Calvary. He can forgive sins, he can bless, he can anoint the dying.

He is given definite responsibilities. He must accept the burden of celibacy, he must say the Divine Office every day. He is given a definite task to do—in a parish, in a school, or in some more specialized assignment. Always he is bound to obey his bishop or his religious superior.

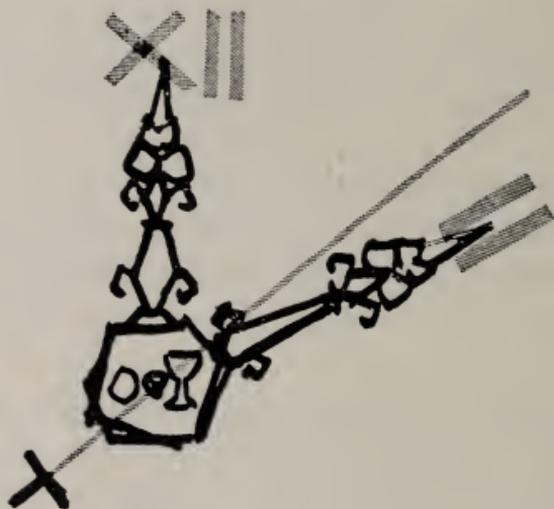
The priest faces many difficulties. Though called to be a hero, he is deeply aware of the weaknesses and failings of his character and personality.

Also, he is doomed to continual disappointment in his work with his people. Not only are the weak and the careless a constant concern, but he is also plagued by the selfishness and narrowness of his good people.

God must fill the empty places in his life. God does so, but it requires a constant effort on the priest's part. And the priest enjoys the consolation of seeing sinners repent, unbelievers converted, and the faithful progress on their way to Heaven.

Pray for priests, that the Lord may guide them, protect them from evil and make them worthy shepherds of His flock.

Prayer: Let my prayer arise like incense in Your sight, O Lord, and my hands like the evening sacrifice. Amen.



The Second Week of LENT



Monday of the Second Week

Loneliness

He has not left Me alone, because I do always the things that are pleasing to Him. (John 8, 29.)

To be alone—nothing is more frightening. There is nothing which drives us more to extremes, than to avoid being lonely. Yet there is no affliction which so dogs the footsteps of modern man more persistently than the feeling that he is alone in a hostile world.

Most of us go on trying variations of a cure for loneliness that we know will bring us no peace. We fill up the “holes,” the empty spaces in our lives. We avoid silence; we chuck full every nook of our day with some variety of sound—conversation, the radio, music, television, the ring of the phone, the sound of our own voice. In desperation we sing to ourselves or whistle.

Nor must there be any blank space in our activity. The part of the day that duty leaves free must not be left to rest. Join a club, or a half dozen of them. Take up a hobby. “Don’t just sit there; do something.” “Make something of yourself.” “See to the lawn; the crabgrass is gaining.”

We live with a fear we won’t admit even to our-

selves. We are afraid to be silent or alone for even a few minutes. For it takes only a moment of silence for the voice of God to be heard. And He might remind us of all the things we do which are not pleasing to Him, the things which really leave us alone and lonely.

Prayer: Be with us, O almighty God, hear our prayers, and grant Your mercy to us whom You permit confidently to rely on Your goodness. Amen.



Tuesday of the Second Week

Humility

Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. (Matt. 23, 12.)

We, they tell us, are the status-seeking generation. There is, however, nothing new about this too-human desire to be as big as possible in the eyes of the world.

The Pharisees dressed to impress others with their social and religious status. Their status symbols were widened phylacteries and enlarged tassels. They loved "the first places at suppers and the front seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the market places."

Humans have always chased after the baubles and trinkets that attract attention and material respect. At the heart of the pursuit is the deep dissatisfaction with what we are. Always we want to be something other than we are.

Sometimes our pursuit of social status is an escape from the deep desire that haunts us to be better morally and spiritually. We have been made in the image and likeness of God, and planted deep in our hearts is the desire to be ever more and more like the God who made us.

To be saints—this is the status to which we are called. And by the paradox which Christ points out, we do not climb to sanctity, we humble ourselves.

To accept the fact that everything we have and are comes from God as a pure gift, to realize that we have soiled the gift with sin, to seek to shine only in the light of God—this is humility. No need to exalt ourselves; for God exalts the humble.

Prayer: That we, O Lord, may be made worthy of Your sacred gifts, make us, we beseech You, always obey Your commandments. Amen.



Wednesday of the Second Week *Suffering*

. . . *turn our mourning into joy, that we may live and praise Your name, O Lord. (Esther 13, 17.)*

The mother of the Apostles, James and John, like all mothers, wanted the best for her sons. When Christ came into His Kingdom, would He, she asked, see to it, that her sons sat at His right and left hand.

Christ's reply was pointed. "You do not know what you are asking for. Can you drink of the cup of which I am about to drink?"

The "cup" which Christ referred to was the cup of suffering, so terrible to contemplate that in the Garden of Gethsemane, He, Himself, begged His Father to let it pass.

Do you wish to sit at the side of Christ in the Kingdom of Heaven? The reply is the same. Are you prepared to pay the price? Are you prepared for suffering?

To be a Christian in modern, secular America often requires heroic sacrifice. To obey the mar-

riage laws of the Church can be at times a crucifixion of your deepest natural desires. To be Christian in your business dealings may require not only great self-denial but sacrifices for those you love the most.

To accept, however, the cross of Christ, to embrace the pain it involves is to have your mourning turned to joy; is to find yourself finally at the right hand of the Father.

Prayer: Look kindly, O Lord, upon the sacrifices we offer You, and through these holy dealings loose the bonds of our sins. Amen.



Thursday of the Second Week

Things

I am the Lord who searches the heart and proves the reins: who gives to everyone according to his way. (Jer. 17, 10.)

Things! We are surrounded by them. They fill our days. They become our masters or our servants. They become the bait that lures us to final failure; or the building blocks of our heavenly mansion.

But there is no escaping them. Nor must we try.

The food we eat, the clothes we wear, the dollars we possess, the dollars we spend, the walls that protect us, the books we read, the papers we scan—the “things” of our life—we have much or we have little.

But for each of them we will be held to an accounting.

Christ tells the story of Dives and Lazarus, the former wealthy, the latter starving at the rich man's gate. In time they both died. The wealthy

man was buried in Hell, the poor man exalted in Heaven.

The wealth of Dives was not in itself a ticket to Hell. But Dives succumbed to the temptation of "things." He let them become his master. He would part with none of them, to obtain more he would do anything.

The temptation of "things" is to place your trust in them, to believe that in their accumulation there is happiness, in their possession security. Happiness, however, is to be sought only in God, and security in the possession of His love and approval.

Prayer: Be present with Your servants, O Lord, and shower perpetual kindness upon those who ask it; that to those who glory in You, their creator and ruler, You may restore the good things they have gathered and preserve what you restore. Amen.



Friday of the Second Week *The Gifts of God*

Therefore I say to you that the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and will be given to a people yielding its fruits. (Matt. 21, 43.)

The grace we possess, the very faith we profess, is a gift from God. We must live with the realization that it can be lost if we fail to use it.

Christ tells the story of a landowner who hands over a vineyard to tenants. In time he sends messengers to collect the fruits of his fields. "The vinedressers seized his servants, and beat one, killed another, and stoned another." When he sent his own son, they killed him too.

The landowner is God. The story is a parable of his dealings with the Jewish race, who stoned and killed his prophets, and finally His Son. But

it is also a parable of the life of every man who receives into his keeping the gifts of God. They are only loaned. God has a right to expect fruits from them.

To each of us God sends His messengers, His prophets, His priests, His preachers, His teachers, to remind us of our duty to yield fruit. He sends His own Son time and time again in the words of the Gospel, in the power of His sacraments, especially in the Eucharist.

Lent is such a visitation, such a reminder of our duty to use our gifts from God fruitfully. It is a warning of how easily we lose what we hold only by the grace of God.

Prayer: Grant unto Your people, O Lord, we beseech You, health of soul and body, that, by persevering in good works, we may deserve to be defended by the protection of Your power. Amen.



Saturday of the Second Week *God, Our Father*

While he was yet a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. (Lk. 15, 20.)

We have all had it happen to us. We have known someone for a long time without ever seeing him. His reputation we know; perhaps, from a picture, we know his appearance. But until we have met someone, talked with him, felt the impress of his personality, we never really know him. When we meet him for the first time, our impressions change.

Such was the case with God and man. The Jews had heard His voice, seen the traces of His nature in the world, knew His mind as expressed in the laws He gave them.

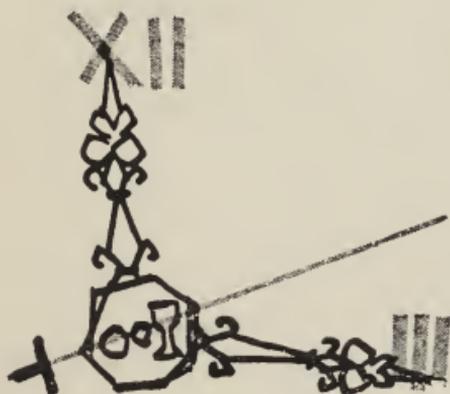
But not until Christ came, to walk the earth, to

share with man the whole range of human experience, did men grasp what God is really like.

Christ showed us God as a loving Father, the kind of Father who would stand and wait for the return of a prodigal son. For it is His own Father that Christ is talking about in the parable of the son—you and I—who takes His father's wealth and squanders it in riotous living.

The picture that we have of God is our most important possession. If we picture Him as a cruel despot waiting for us to step out of line, we are doomed to remain where we fall. But to see God, as Christ presents Him to us, as a loving, understanding and compassionate Father, is to assure us of a merciful forgiveness and hope in those moments when we most need it.

Prayer: Keep Your Household, we beseech You, O Lord, with continual loving-kindness that, as it leans only on the hope of heavenly grace, it may also be fortified by heavenly protection. Amen.





The Third Week of LENT

Monday of the Third Week *God's Forgiveness*

And his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was made clean. (4 Kings 5, 14.)

God will forgive any sin, no matter how great it is. This is a truth so simple that we sometimes forget it. But it is so. There is no ingrained habit of impurity, no entrenched spirit of selfishness, bitterness or hatred that God will not forgive and root out if we let Him.

The story of Naaman the leper in today's Mass illustrates this. A Syrian general, a Gentile, Naaman is at first unwilling to accept the directions of the Hebrew prophet Eliseus. But he finally does so, and the horrible disease of leprosy is cured.

God cured the lepers mentioned in the Bible to let us know that the ugly diseases of sin can also be cured. Like Naaman we must have hope, we must not despair of a cure.

Then we must follow directions, God's directions. Avoid the persons and places that drag us into sin. Unmask the sources in ourselves that produce these sins—frustrations, hidden feelings of jealousy, pride. Go to confession.

No need to become discouraged if we fall back

into sin again. It may take time. But God's grace does win out. If we co-operate, it will work wonders in us.

Prayer: Let Your mercy, O Lord, come to our assistance, so that by Your protection we may be worthy to be delivered from the dangers that threaten us because of our sins, and to be saved by Your deliverance. Amen.



Tuesday of the Third Week *Forgiveness of Others*

Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times? . . . not seven times, but seventy times seven. (Matt. 18, 21-22.)

We say the Our Father every day, but often enough we neglect the meaning of the words. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Christ Himself told the Apostles when He gave them this prayer that the measure of our forgiveness of others will be God's measure of forgiveness with us. This theme is repeated again and again in His words and in His parables.

A harsh, critical condemnatory attitude toward others often justifies itself on the grounds of frankness or honesty. Yet real honesty makes us see that we are all too ready to pick out the few flaws and defects in the personality of another, and let his finer qualities go by unnoticed and unmentioned.

Somehow we feel better and more righteous when others have been taken down a peg or two. Our ego feeds on the weaknesses of others, and finds satisfaction in the flattering comparisons that can be made.

And so we find it hard to forgive. Every real or imagined slur or injury that we have received from another is a weapon that we want to be able to use at a later time.

But Christ's meaning is clear: Forgive, and forgive wholeheartedly, holding nothing back. Then God will be able to forgive us with the same generosity.

Prayer: From my secret sins, cleanse me, O Lord, and from those of others spare Your servant. Amen.



Wednesday of the Third Week Rigorism

Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries. . . . These are the things that defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man. (Matt. 15, 19-20.)

In the Gospel of today's Mass, Jesus speaks out against the Pharisees, the Jewish religious leaders of that time.

These men laid as great a stress on their own interpretations of God's Commandments and their additions to them as they did on the Commandments themselves. The result was that they often buried the Commandments under the weight of these additional burdens.

The Pharisees are dead; but today we find people who are "more Catholic than the Pope." They are not satisfied with what the Church requires of them; they must have more rigorous standards.

Such Catholics are quite critical of certain types of reading and entertainment, often too, of contemporary social customs, always in a negative way. They may also have certain religious devotions which they must perform, regardless of the inconvenience this might mean to others.

If we have this tendency toward rigorism, we must be rigorous with ourselves in getting rid of it. Otherwise, for ourselves and for others, religion

becomes something harsh and distasteful, instead of the source of hope, joy and love that God intends it to be.

Prayer: Grant, we beg You, O almighty God, that we, who seek the grace of Your protection, may be free from all evils and serve You with a quiet mind. Amen.



Thursday of the Third Week *The Holy Spirit*

Make your ways and your doings good; and I will dwell with you in this place. (Jeremias 7, 3.)

In today's Lesson, the prophet Jeremias is told to stand at the entrance to the temple, and to tell the people under what conditions God will dwell with them.

This may recall to our minds a phrase from catechism days when we learned that by Baptism each one of us becomes a "temple of the Holy Ghost." Our own bodies and souls are the dwelling-places, the temples, of the Holy Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit seems to be the most neglected person of the Holy Trinity. The Our Father and the prayers of the Mass are directed to the Father. There are constant reminders of God the Son, who became the man, Jesus Christ, for our sakes.

The third person of the Trinity is often forgotten, yet it is He who performs the necessary task of sanctification in us. It is He who instills in us those generous thoughts that we experience from time to time, those unselfish impulses, that urge to do something extra for God.

He remains in us permanently; only mortal sin drives Him out, and restoration to sanctifying grace brings Him back. He speaks to us from time to

time; our task is to listen to Him and follow His suggestions.

Prayer: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the *Holy Spirit*. Amen.



Friday of the Third Week

Grace

The water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up unto life everlasting. (John 4, 14.)

Today's Gospel tells the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. An important element in the story is the mention of the "living water" that Jesus wants to give us. This "living water" is nothing other than sanctifying grace.

Baptism brings us the beginnings of sanctifying grace. When the baptismal waters flow across our foreheads, the spring of living water begins to flow in us. It can be stopped only by mortal sin; it begins again when such sin is removed.

This emphasis of Jesus on "living" water is important. Elsewhere He constantly refers to grace as life. Grace in reality is a new kind of life that God gives us, not a thing or a quality.

This new kind of life makes us capable of living God's divine life in Heaven. God gives us a share of His own life; with it we can share His happiness in Heaven; without it we cannot.

A good illustration of this is found in the Sunday comic strips. In these an artist like Walt Disney takes an animal such as a mouse or a duck and gives it a human kind of life. Ordinarily, a mouse or a duck cannot speak or think, but once it is given a human life it can do so.

God is our Walt Disney. He gives us a divine

life that makes us capable of sharing His own type of existence. This is sanctifying grace, which is a "fountain of water, springing up unto life everlasting."

Prayer: O Lord, may the reception of the sacraments cleanse us from sins and lead us to the heavenly realms. Amen.



Saturday of the Third Week *God's Knowledge*

Let him who is without sin among you be the first to cast a stone at her. (John 8, 7.)

The story of Susanna and the story of the woman taken in adultery in today's Mass both illustrate the same point. Only God knows what is in man and only He can make a true judgment of a man's worth.

In both cases, a woman accused unjustly and a woman accused justly, there are men eager to condemn a sinner. But God is able to read hearts, and He made it known that the accusers were worse than the women they wanted to condemn.

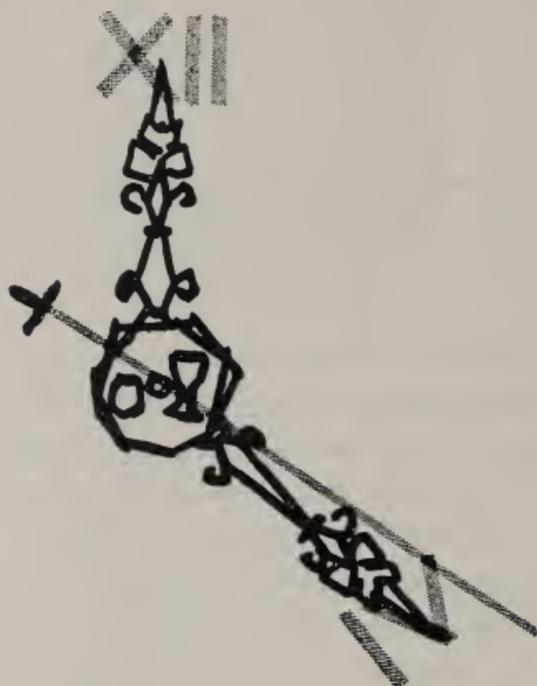
At times, the fact that God will judge us at death provokes a wholesome fear. There is no act done in hiding, no thought or desire carefully concealed, that God does not know of and that He will not recall at the judgment.

But at other times, this same fact can be very encouraging. Often we have done good and unselfish things that no one seems to have noticed; we have entertained kind and unselfish thoughts toward others. We may have been misjudged and misunderstood. Others, especially those closest to us, have not recognized our true worth.

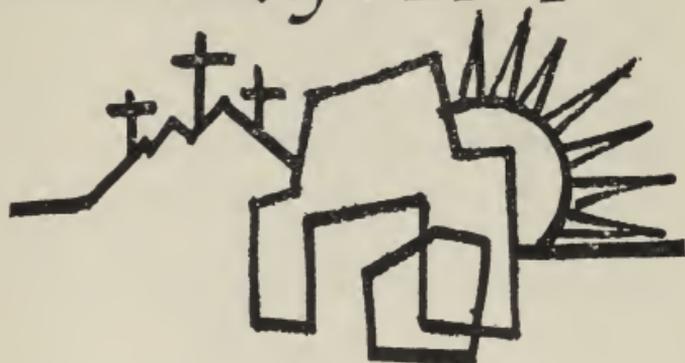
But all this will come out at the judgment. God knows our temptations and our weaknesses. He

seems more eager to find the good points than the bad. "Neither will I condemn thee. Go thy way and sin no more."

Prayer: Grant, we beg You, almighty God, that the offering of the Sacrifice may ever purify and preserve our frailty from all evil. Amen.



The Fourth Week of LENT



Monday of the Fourth Week Life and Death

*Destroy this temple and in three days I will
rebuild it. (John 2, 19.)*

Holy Week approaches. The Church—the Mystical Body of Christ—looks forward to reliving the two great moments of Christ's life, His death and resurrection.

The pattern of Christ's life is the pattern, also, of our Christian life. Before we can share the joy of union with the resurrected Christ, we must suffer something of the pain and ignominy of His passion. In the following of Christ, life comes through death.

It began with our baptism. The font of baptismal water is compared to a tomb into which we must descend with Christ in order to rise a new man, with a new life.

The whole of Lent follows the pattern. For forty days we are surrounded with the deep purple trappings of death, as we attempt day after day to die a little to our self love, so that on Easter we may rise to a new life with Christ.

It is the lesson taught by today's Gospel. Christ comes to the temple (our souls) and finds it filled with money changers and merchants (our history

of dealings with sin). Angered, Christ takes a whip, driving the changers from the temple. They have no place in the House of God.

Before God can live in our souls, our sins must be driven out. The old life of our soul must die, to make way for the life of Christ.

Prayer: Be unto me, O God, a protector, and a place of refuge to save me. O God, I have hoped in you: O Lord, let me never be confounded. Amen.



Tuesday of the Fourth Week *Justice and Mercy*

*Arise, O Lord, bring help to us, and deliver us for
Your name's sake. (Ps. 43, 26.)*

For forty days Moses had been on the mountain top praying for his people. Then God ordered Moses back to the valley. The Jews had forsaken the God who had pulled them out of slavery, and had made a golden calf which they were adoring in place of God. "Let me alone," God said, "that My wrath may be enkindled against them, and that I may destroy them."

But Moses begged for his people, and the wrath of God was stilled.

Moses is a figure of Christ. We are the people in the valley bought in the moment of Baptism out of slavery to sin. Like them we have, with every sin, set up false gods to serve. Time and time again we have put power or money or pleasure in the place of God. For every sin is a kind of idolatry in which we turn from God to a creature.

Christ, however, has come down from the heights to plead our cause and offer His own life that we might live. To save us Christ has offered the sacrifice of His own life.

Prayer: Have mercy on Your people, O Lord, and from the unceasing tribulation under which they labor grant them relief in Your mercy. Amen.



Wednesday of the Fourth Week

Listening

*One thing I know, that whereas I was blind,
now I see. (John 9, 25.)*

The effect of sin, especially original sin, is to blind our eyes to the things of God, to stop up our ears to His voice. This is why in the ceremony of Baptism the priest touches the ears of the child and says "Be opened."

The blind man in today's Gospel is a figure of mankind blind to the vision of God. In the ancient Church this was the day when the new catechumens, the converts to be, were introduced to the Our Father, the Creed and the Four Gospels.

Faith comes through hearing. The Gospel is preached to us. It is the voice of God, His inspired Word, that is meant to probe into the deepest parts of our heart, and evoke from us a response of Faith and Love.

Each Sunday the Gospel is read to us. Each reading is an opportunity for grace, a chance to deepen our Faith, and in this deepened knowledge to come to a greater love for God who speaks to us.

Like so many other chances for grace, we let the Gospels slip by our ears as though they had never been opened.

Prayer: May the ears of Your mercy, O Lord, be open to the prayers of Your suppliants, and that You may grant their desires to them that seek You, make them to ask the things that are pleasing to You. Amen.

Thursday of the Fourth Week The Church

He who was dead, sat up and began to speak. And He (Christ) gave him to His mother. (Luke 7, 15.)

What is your image of the Church? How do you think of her? A recent survey showed that many Americans think of her as a vast political machine concerned only with banning and condemning.

The true picture is in the Epistle and Gospel of today's Mass. Both of these passages from Scripture tell the story of a dead youth who is brought back to life and returned to his widowed mother.

The youth, of course, is man in sin. In the Epistle it is the prophet Eliseus who performs the miracle; in the Gospel it is Christ. But it is the widowed mother who especially interests us. She is a figure of the Church.

From the death-silenced lips of the young man there can come no appeal for a new life. But his mother—the Church—throws herself at the feet of the Prophet, clinging to his legs, begging for the life of her child. In the Gospel it is the sorrow, the deep sense of loss in the mother that attracts the compassion of Christ. In both cases out of compassion for the mother, the youth is restored to life.

This is the Church as she really is, a mother desperately concerned for the welfare of her children—us. The sins of her children—their spiritual death—produces in her a sense of loss that leads her to beg for our life. Christ invariably answers her prayers.

Prayer: Purify us, O God, that the prayers of Your Church, which are pleasing to You, may become the more pleasing from the purified hearts with which they bring the gifts of devotion. Amen.

Have I not told you that if you believe you shall behold the glory of God? (John 11, 40.)

No one, more than a Catholic, has a deeper sense of sin, a deeper realization of what it means to offend God, and the terrible consequence of such acts of rebellion. But no one possesses more hope in the face of sin.

The difference is in the sacrament of Penance.

Christ who came to call sinners, and not the just, did not permit His voice of forgiveness to die with His crucifixion. He arranged to speak to all generations through the voice of His priests. No matter how grave a man's sin might be, no matter how deeply or how long he has been steeped in it, Christ will forgive him through His sacrament of reconciliation.

Confession, however, is not just for those occasions when we have sinned gravely. It is for all times, a constant opportunity to come face to face with our sins small as they may be, a repeated chance to be totally honest with ourselves.

With each confession there comes an increase of self-knowledge, of grace, and the means to prevent us from falling back into sin. Used properly, with careful preparation, and real sorrow, we can grow a step at a time into the holiness which Christ intends for us.

But if the confessional box is left vacant except for special "occasions" how can it possibly do its work of mercy for us?

Prayer: O God, who renews the world with ineffable sacraments, grant, we beseech You, that Your Church may both profit by the eternal institutions and not be left without temporal assistance. Amen.

He that is merciful to them shall be their shepherd. (Is. 49, 10.)

For fifteen centuries this has been a day for the conferring of Holy Orders—the creation of priests.

The priest, a man from among men. Perhaps you knew him “when.” He came from a home like your own. There was nothing special or extraordinary about him or his upbringing. He went “away” for a few years and when he returned it was hard at first to realize what had happened.

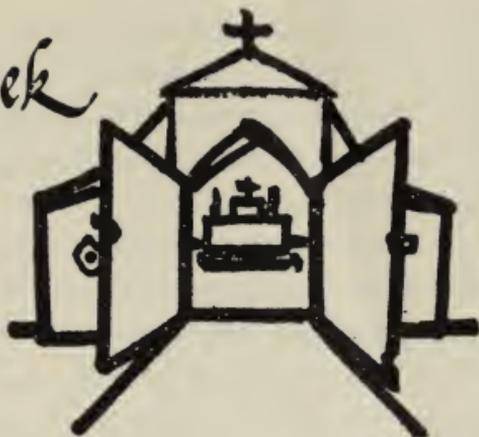
There was a miraculous power in his words. He could bend over bread and wine, say a few words, and Almighty God was present in his hands. With other words he could forgive your gravest sins. He could witness your marriage, baptize your children, and strengthen you in the moment of death.

Do you give to his priesthood, the power of Christ that dwells in him, the respect it deserves? Do you pray for him that the terrible burdens of his responsibility to Christ will not be too heavy? Are you patient with him when he is weary? Do you judge him kindly? When you speak of him, do your words help or hinder his work?

The priest belongs to you. He is the merciful shepherd whom Christ has given to you. But the priest needs you too; in serving you he finds his own salvation and his only happiness. Pray for him.

Prayer: O God, who chooses rather to have pity on them that hope in You than to be angry, grant us to weep as becomes us, for the evils that we have done, that we may deserve to find the favor of Your compassion. Amen.

Passion Week



Monday of Passion Week

The Gentiles

Will He go to those dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? (John 7, 35.)

The interest that Jesus showed in the Gentiles astonished the Jews of His day. After all, were not the Jews God's chosen people? Did not God's law and revelation come to them? Why worry about these others?

Modern Catholics sometimes have this spirit. We tend at times to be too parochial, too narrow, in our interests. We join only Catholic societies, take part only in Catholic activities. We forget that the word "catholic" means "universal," that Catholic is spelled with a small "c" as well as a capital "C."

It is not that we have no interest in the spiritual welfare of non-Catholics. The generosity of American Catholics in supporting foreign mission endeavors would disprove this. But we sometimes forget that the Gentiles, the pagans, are not merely some people in India and Japan that we will never meet.

The Gentiles include the family whose back-yard adjoins ours, the men at the office or shop, the neighbors we meet at the store.

For many of these people Christ is no more real than he is to the masses of Korea or Nyasaland. In fact the devotion of Catholics in some "mission" lands like China in the face of persecution puts us to shame.

To our own Gentiles, those nearest to us, we should be ready with the helping hand, the answer to a question, the encouragement needed by those who are stumbling in the darkness.

Prayer: Grant to us, O Lord, that the saving victim may purify us from our sins and be a propitiation for us before Your majesty. Amen.



Tuesday of Passion Week

The World

The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I bear witness concerning it, that its works are evil. (John 7, 7.)

Throughout the Gospel of St. John, Jesus often speaks of the world in unfavorable terms. He tells the Apostles that they are "in" the world but not "of" it. The world is evil, its works are evil, we must have as little to do with it as possible.

All this may strike us as being a little strange. After all, didn't God create the world? Isn't He at this very moment keeping it in existence? What is so wrong then?

It is true that God has created the world. But, beginning with the original sin of Adam and continuing to the sins committed at this very moment, man has been introducing other elements into God's world, elements of evil.

As a result of sin, and as a result of the spirit of pride, envy, lust and greed that produces it, a world of a much different character has come into

being. It is a human world, but a world that has been somehow divorced from God.

This world is autonomous, it has its own rhythm, its own convictions, its own conventions, its own standards. In some respects its principles may coincide with God's, but this is only accidental. It is a world that is not necessarily against God, but a world that feels itself quite capable of doing without Him.

The Christian, then, must be wary of accepting the world's standards. They look good, they may be right in certain cases. But a world without God lacks something, and that something is the most important of all. Our standards must come from beyond the world, from Him.

Prayer: Grant us, we beg You, O Lord, a persevering obedience to Your will, that in our days the people who serve You may increase in merit and in number. Amen.



Wednesday of Passion Week *His Slowness*

How long dost thou keep us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us openly. (John 10, 24.)

Jesus Christ, while living on earth, moved slowly. At first, this might seem hard to understand. He was to be on earth for such a short time and there was so much to do.

But Christ was God, and God moves slowly; He has all the time in the world, and more besides. Scripture tells us that with God, a thousand years are like a day, and a day like a thousand years. Jesus Christ, then, moved slowly.

One example of this is His reticence about His own divinity. Jesus did not step out of His native village of Nazareth one day, and announce to the

world: "I'm God." No, He had to prepare the minds of the people for this overwhelming truth.

Jesus had to prepare them. He announced Himself as the Messiah, the anointed one of God, the Christ. He worked miracles which gave evidence of divine power. He used expressions about Himself which hinted at something more than human in His personality.

But it was only after a long time, after His resurrection even, that the doubting Apostle Thomas would fall on his knees and say, "My Lord and my God!"

Prayer: Help us, O God our Savior, and for the glory of Your name deliver us, and forgive us for Your name's sake. Amen.



Thursday of Passion Week

Heaven

Upon the rivers of Babylon there we sat and wept, when we remembered Sion. (Psalm 136, 1.)

The Babylonian captivity is one of the great tragic stories of the Old Testament. The psalmist, the prophets sent by God, continually exhorted the captive Hebrews never to forget their homeland, their beloved city of Jerusalem crowned by the hill of Sion.

For the Christian there can be only one homeland, one Sion—and that is Heaven. Materialists poke fun at this belief. To them it is "pie in the sky," a silly hope instilled into the masses by misguided or dishonest religious leaders to prevent them from working toward a better world on earth.

To the believer, Heaven is real. It may not be exactly as it is sometimes pictured. We probably will not stand in white robes strumming harps and

singing hymns. The child's image of "all the candy and ice cream you can eat" may not be realized.

But we do know that Heaven will bring the perfect and complete satisfaction of all our human longings, the total fulfillment of our personalities.

Heaven has been described as "seeing God." This does not strike us as profoundly as it should. We are afraid that it might be a little boring.

Yet, it is in seeing God, in possessing His wonderful Being who is all-beauty, all-goodness, all-truth, Him Who will be the inexhaustible source of progressive happiness, that we will find our ultimate completion and satisfaction.

Prayer: Remember Your word to Your servant, O Lord, in which You have given me hope; this has comforted me in my lowly state. Amen.



Friday of Passion Week Our Lady of Sorrows

O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow. (Lam. 1, 12.)

Today we see Mary standing at the foot of the cross. Scripture says no more than this: Mary stood by the cross. Jesus gave her John for a son and told John to take her as his mother. Nothing more.

Some religious thinkers have said that Mary, at the Annunciation when she was told that she was to be the mother of God's Son, was informed of all the suffering she was to undergo and the purpose of each of these sorrows.

This may be so. But it seems to detract from the dread responsibility Mary would have felt at being chosen His mother. The terrible uncertainty,

the fear of the unknown course of God's plan, would have been removed from her.

It seems more human to picture Mary as being given a heavy responsibility, a terrible burden, whose full weight she would feel more intensely as time went on and events unfolded.

How she must have suffered seeing her son rejected by her own people, watching Jesus taking the inexorable steps that led to the cross. And now she was alone, with only her faith to support her. Mary becomes close to us, very much like us, and we can imitate more easily Our Lady of Sorrows.

Prayer: We beg You, O Lord Jesus Christ, let Your mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose holy soul was pierced by a sword of sorrow at the hour of Your passion, intercede for us now and at the hour of our death. Amen.



Saturday of Passion Week

Persecution

The chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also. For on his account many of the Jews began to leave them and to believe in Jesus. (John 12, 10-11.)

The opening words of today's Gospel record a frightening example of fanaticism. Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead; instead of believing in Him, His enemies want Lazarus to die again.

Jesus has promised persecution to His followers. It seems that the closer we are to Him, the more likely it is that persecution will strike us.

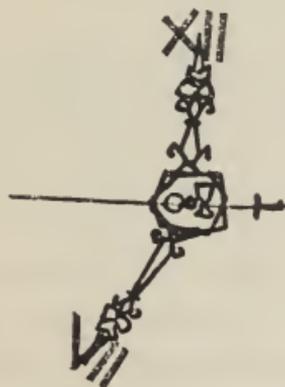
Here in America we do not have and do not expect any overt persecution. But many of us can recall incidents in private life, in public or business life, when we or some fellow Catholics have had to endure a certain amount of unpleasantness or subtle pressure because of our faith.

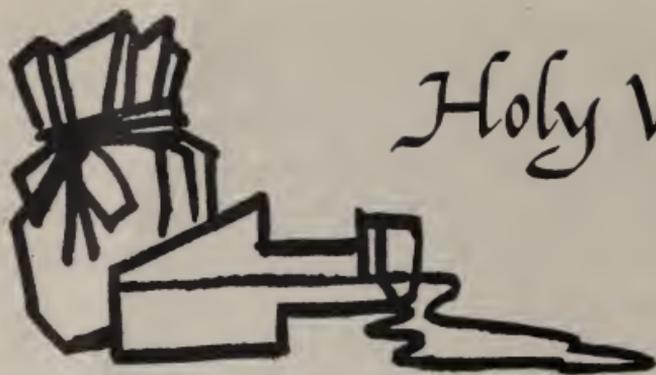
During the Roman persecutions in Africa in the third century A. D., there were three classes of Christians: those who bravely endured martyrdom, those who yielded and sacrificed to the idols, and a third group who, not sacrificing to the idols, bribed the Roman officials to give them documents stating that they had.

How human this third group seems. How often we are tempted to compromise, to try to hold on to the faith, and yet not suffer any inconvenience for it.

The forceful words of Christ should shake us out of our lethargy: "I would that thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, I am about to vomit thee out of my mouth."

Prayer: Deliver me not over, O Lord, to the will of those who trouble me, for unjust witnesses have risen up against me. Amen.





Holy Week

Monday of Holy Week

Judas and Mary

*He is near that justifies me; who will contend
with me. (Is. 50, 8.)*

Holy Week has begun. It is six days before the passover. In the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, Christ has sat down to supper. It is at this moment that Mary spills the ointment over the feet of Christ and dries them with her hair. Judas is scandalized.

In this moment the lines are drawn. Mary and Judas become the types of two kinds of men to whom Christ will give His love, His own body in the Eucharist.

There will be those like Mary who will respond with an outpouring of devotion to the Savior who has shown them so much love. There will be those like Judas whose only response to the love of Christ will be rejection and treachery.

Ultimately we must line ourselves up with one or the other. For to each of us Christ has given His own Body and Blood. He has, in a way of speaking, surrendered Himself into our keeping. We have a choice. How shall we treat Christ? How shall we receive the gift of Himself?

None of us wants to associate ourselves with Judas. The thought is so repugnant that we would

hardly give it a thought. But the fact is that few of us have the courage to associate ourself with Mary, for such courage, such completely generous love is frightening. The choice, however, must be made.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech You, O almighty God, that we, who, in the great mass of adversities, faint through our own weakness, may take heart anew through the pleading of the passion of Your only begotten Son. Amen.



Tuesday of Holy Week

Peter

May God have mercy on us and bless us. (Ps. 66, 2.)

Of all the characters in the Passion none shows so many sides of his character as Peter. He is a big man. His virtues are large, and his sins violent.

In the moments before the Last Supper, Christ washes the feet of His disciples. Only Peter objects. He does not submit to this paradox until Christ warns him that unless He washes his feet, Peter shall have no part with Him. It is Peter that boasts that although all should deny Christ, he will not. In the Garden of Gethsemane, it is Peter who comes to the defense of Christ with a sword.

But it is Peter, also, who in the courtyard outside the room where Christ was being tried, denied three times that he even knew Christ.

Our sympathy goes naturally to this man whose weakness and strength are both so great. In a way we envy him.

If it is true that perhaps our sins are not so dramatic, the same is true of our virtues. We are little people whose lives are compounded and trapped in a circle of trivialities. Peter's flood of

tears at having denied Christ are as foreign to us as are his public denials.

If Peter is a man who has sinned greatly, he has loved even more intensely. It would be a wonderful thing to have the same said of us. Our penance and shame is a pretty sorry thing.

Prayer: May Your mercy, O God, purge us from every trace of our past and make us ready to receive a holy renovation. Amen.



Wednesday of Holy Week

Treachery

*If an enemy had reviled me, I could have borne it. . . .
But you, my other self, my companion and my bosom
friend! (Ps. 54, 12 and 14.)*

Tradition has called this day Spy Wednesday and focused our attention on the figure of Judas. His name has become a symbol of the treachery that is involved in every sin.

To break a law of the civil authority is to trespass against the cold wording of an impersonal statute. It is the boast of our law that its rulings are beyond personality.

Not so with sins against God. They are all insults to a person, not a distant, faceless lawmaker, but against the Christ who died for our souls.

We will never know the evil of our sins until we see them in reference to God's love for us, and the love we owe Him. If we love Him, He told us, then we will keep His commandments. It is true that only when we have come to love God deeply will we then cease to love sin. For only then will His commandments seem to be not restrictions on our freedom, but what they really are, expressions of His infinite concern for our welfare.

Judas has given his name to this day. But it

is Christ who gives it meaning. Until our service of God is transformed from narrow, skimping, bloodless obedience, to full-hearted, passionate love for the God who already loves us, we will never understand the malice of our sins. Until then we will not feel in every sin the horror of Judas' kiss.

Prayer: Look down, we beseech You, O Lord, upon us, Your people, for which Our Lord Jesus Christ did not hesitate to be delivered into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer the torment of the cross. Amen.



Holy Thursday

The Eucharist

*This is My Body which shall be given up
for you. (1 Cor. 11, 24.)*

What a strange, interwoven series of emotions flood Holy Week! Tomorrow we shall sorrow at the death of Christ. Saturday will hold a kind of emptiness. Yet before Sunday dawns, every vestige of sorrow will be wiped away in the triumph of Christ's rising from the dead.

Tonight—Christ will be betrayed, His apostles will sleep through the terrible agony in the Garden. But at His Last Supper with the man who will betray Him, and the others who will flee, there is a moment which is among the most beautiful of Christ's life.

This is the moment when taking bread and wine into His hands He transforms them into His own Body and Blood, ordains His apostles to say Mass, and commands that for all of time, the souls of His Faithful should be fed with His own Flesh and Blood.

In the midst of all this day's sorrow, we are given the Eucharist. We are given to eat and drink the

very Body which tomorrow will be lacerated for us, and the Blood which will flow for our salvation.

In the light of Holy Thursday and Good Friday it seems incredible that men could ever grow used to the mystery of God's presence in the Eucharist. It seems incredible that on a Sunday morning the majority of Catholics will leave the altar rail empty.

Believing what we do, knowing that Christ's Body is to be had almost "for the asking" how can we be so indifferent! But it's not a question, is it, of believing *what* we do? It's a question of our faith, a fire which we have allowed to burn so low, that its ashes are incapable of inflaming our love.

Prayer: We beseech You, O Holy Lord, Almighty Father, Eternal God, that He may render our sacrifice acceptable to You, who, by giving it to His disciples on this day, taught them that it is done in commemoration of Him, Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen.



Good Friday

The Cross

And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

(John 19, 30.)

On the first Good Friday, Jesus accomplished what He had come upon earth to do. He had come into the world to die, and on that Good Friday He died.

We are all going to die. Yet we do not like to think that we were born only to die. That is not true for us; we were born to live.

But Jesus came to die. It was only by His death that we would have a chance to live. Eternal life for us was bought by Jesus' death in time.

The original sin of Adam had cut men off from Heaven, it had insulted God. Somehow or other

it had to be made up for. We couldn't do it ourselves. So God had to do it for us.

God chose to become a man, to send His Son to become one of us. Being God, He could satisfy divine justice; being man He could represent us.

Nothing shows God's love for mankind more than the Cross. Many words could be spoken or written about the meaning of suffering, about God's love for men, but they would sound hollow without the Cross.

Jesus suffered as much as a human being can suffer. The people turned against Him, His followers deserted Him, He sweated blood in anticipation of the agony He would undergo.

His enemies arrested Him, lied about Him, beat Him, slapped Him, spit in His face, mocked Him. They put a cross on His back, made Him carry it, nailed Him to it and hung Him on it.

All this Jesus suffered for me and my sins.

Prayer: We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your cross You have redeemed the world. Amen.



Holy Saturday

Jesus in the Tomb

Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here. (Matthew 28, 5-6.)

Jesus died, and His friends buried His body in a tomb carved out of a rock, rolling a large stone before the entrance.

Despite the disconcerting events that happened at the moment of Jesus' death, His enemies were happy. The agitator, the disturber of public peace, was out of the way. They would not be annoyed any more.

The followers of Christ were frightened, dismayed even. The great prophet, the Son of God, had not worked the expected miracle to deliver Himself. He had allowed His enemies to prevail.

Christ's Church sometimes goes through periods of history when she seems to be in the tomb. Her enemies have prevailed, she is forgotten, her followers are dismayed.

But three days later, Easter Sunday comes. Jesus does not stay in the tomb. He rises from the dead and gives His followers and His enemies a magnificent demonstration of His divine power.

Now His friends can rejoice, those friends who remained loyal even after the crucifixion, those who stay with the Church during her periods of darkness, those like ourselves who have spent forty days of Lent in prayer and fasting.

"Lumen Christi" says the deacon in the Vigil Service of today as he brings the lighted candle into the darkened church. May the light of Christ bring joy and happiness to us, His faithful.

Prayer: Pour forth upon us, O Lord, the Spirit of Your love, that those whom You have filled with the Easter sacraments may, by Your goodness, be of one mind. Amen.



